



City of South Fulton Government

STATEMENT

Department of Communications

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South Fulton Mayor Issues Statement on Death of Principal Dr. Jamar Robinson

(CITY OF SOUTH FULTON, GA – November 11, 2020) – City of South Fulton Mayor William “Bill” Edwards issued the following statement today on the passing of Westlake High School Principal Dr. Jamar Robinson and his wife, AnneMarie.

I am profoundly saddened by the news of the untimely passings of Dr. Jamar Robinson and his wife, AnneMarie. As one of the state’s top educators, Dr. Robinson left an unmistakable and lifelong positive impact on hundreds of youth from the city and Fulton County. His legacy shines on in their lives and never will be diminished. I will miss him deeply, not only as valuable guiding force in our city and on our youth, but as a personal friend and ally in serving our residents. God bless you man of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. Your work here is done.

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Millage Rate FAQ

Why are you raising the millage rate?

Our city, as do many others across Georgia and the nation faces a significant decrease in revenues because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Revenue-generating activities – including the collection of permitting fees, user fees and fines – have slowed. To ensure the City can provide key services – such as public safety, parks and recreation, road and right of way maintenance and others – we must find additional sources of revenue. In addition, the city has committed to doing everything possible to avoid furloughs and layoffs among its staff, things other governments have implemented to balance budgets.

Have you done all you can to reduce expenses?

The city's departments successfully combed through their individual budgets for the remainder of FY20, following a directive to reduce expenses by 16 percent, or about \$7.8 million. They city repeated that process for the FY21 budget, again reducing operating expenses by another 16 percent from their original FY20 budgets.

What will the added revenue be used for?

Proceeds from the rate increase will be used to ensure the city can continue to deliver crucial services at the current level.

Our police department has made great strides in reducing crime – posting a 16-percent drop in violent crime during 2019 – and cutting response times. This has been accomplished by adding needed officers and developing an expanded police beat design. Our fire department has increased the robustness of its service through added personnel and by replacing key outdated equipment the city inherited from the county.

As we work to expand the delivery of world-class service that sets our city apart, our Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department has added an entire arts and culture division, complete with new facilities, classes and performances. The pandemic has blocked revenue streams from tuition and box office receipts.

These are just a few of examples of key services on which the city cannot afford to lose momentum.

I've heard Fulton County reclaimed some properties on Fulton Industrial Boulevard, reducing the city's tax digest. Is this true?

Yes, the county removed property and planes at the Fulton County Airport from the city's digest. This resulted in an 8-percent decrease in the digest. The city unfortunately cannot appeal because there is appeal process for cities as there is for individual taxpayers who chose to dispute their property values.



How will the typical homeowner be affected by a millage rate increase?

The following examples shows the difference in tax calculations using the same home value for both non-homestead and homestead land parcels at both the current millage rate of 11.579 mills and the proposed millage rate of 13.399 mills.

Won't leaving the millage rate where it is and not increasing the millage rate provide enough revenue?

No. Leaving the millage rate unchanged simply would not generate enough revenue to ensure the city can adequately maintain key services over an extended and unknown period of time.

The term “rollback rate” has been used a lot lately. What exactly does it mean?

Georgia law requires city and county governments to compute rollback rates when considering their millage rates for the coming fiscal year. The rollback rate is that rate that, without new construction or annexation, would generate the same amount of revenues as the previous year's property tax rate had no property reassessments occurred.

I read where the County approved a small reduction in its millage rate. Why is the city increasing its rate?

The county draws from a far more diverse collection of revenue sources, many of which are not available to the city, such as federal grants that are offered to governments with populations of more than 500,000 or more than a million. These include the CARES Act created to ease the pandemic's burden and other major funding sources for larger cities. With access to these resources, the county can absorb reductions in revenue more easily. In addition, the city provides a majority of the services delivered by Fulton County before the city's incorporation.

Will you reduce the millage rate next year?

The Mayor and City Council have spoken in a public meeting about reducing the millage rate next year if the city reaches previous revenue levels and a reduction is feasible. A millage rate increase would be a temporary bridge to that time.

Is the City in financial trouble and, therefore, needing to add revenue?

It is not accurate to say that the City is in financial trouble. The world is experiencing the most severe global health crisis in modern history. COVID-19 has negatively impacted the way we move, purchase goods and services, educate our children, and deliver services worldwide. The city has made great strides taken over the past two years to develop a strong financial footing. This is the primary reason that we can maintain a strong standing in the wake of the pandemic. We began the FY20 debt-free, a remarkable feat for a then-two-year-old city. We remain committed to growing without generating debt. The millage rate increase will allow us to do so until the local economy improves.